



# *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

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### “Massachusetts Maple Month” Kicks Off at North Andover Farm

NORTH ANDOVER – Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) Commissioner Doug Petersen today carried out a time-honored rite of spring - the ceremonial tapping of a sugar maple tree to kick off the Bay State’s brief but sweet maple sugaring season.

Heralding the onset of the growing season, maple sugaring is the Commonwealth’s first agricultural harvest of the year. In addition to tapping a sugar maple at North Andover’s Turtle Lane Maple Farm with area legislators and members of the Massachusetts Maple Producers Association, Commissioner Petersen read Governor Patrick’s proclamation declaring March as “Massachusetts Maple Month.”

More than 300 Massachusetts maple producers - most located west of Worcester – annually produce about 50,000 gallons of maple syrup worth almost \$3 million. The industry employs more than 1,000 workers, and approximately 60,000 tourists spend over \$1.5 million during the sugaring season at maple farms as well as restaurants, bed-and-breakfasts, country inns, and other attractions in farm communities. The income from maple sugaring is a key factor in the solvency of many dairy farms, according to DAR, and the industry preserves over 8,000 acres of Massachusetts as open space. Of the 11 major maple producing states in the US, Massachusetts ranks eighth.

“We expect a great maple harvest this spring, and look forward to continuing our partnership with maple producers to maximize local markets for their products through our ‘Massachusetts Grown and Fresher’ program,” Commissioner Petersen said.

A series of cold nights and warm days is required to get the sap of sugar maple trees moving. Once maple sap is harvested, farmers boil it down in evaporators to produce the syrup that is prized as a topping for pancakes and waffles and as an ingredient in a wide array of recipes.

It takes about 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of pure maple syrup. Recognizing that this process is both labor and energy intensive, DAR hopes to work with a number of Massachusetts maple sugar houses on ways to cut energy use. DAR's Farm Viability Enhancement Program has already helped several farms to purchase "reverse osmosis" equipment that significantly reduces the water content of maple sap, thereby reducing the amount of energy needed to produce maple syrup. DAR is investigating other energy efficiency and conservation techniques for the maple sugaring industry, including new evaporator types and designs and technologies that focus on heat recovery to pre-heat and de-water maple sap.

For more maple sugaring information, visit [www.massgrown.org](http://www.massgrown.org) (click on Maple), or call the Massachusetts Maple Phone at 413-628-3912. For information about maple events at Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) parks, visit [www.mass.gov/dcr](http://www.mass.gov/dcr) (click on Events).

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